



Women's Research & Education Institute

1750 New York Avenue, NW
Suite 350
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 628-0444
(202) 628-0458 FAX
wrei@wrei.org
<http://www.wrei.org>

Board of Directors

Jean Stapleton
Chair
Esther Coopersmith
Elisebeth Driscoll
Evelyn Dubrow
Barbara J. Easterling
Elizabeth M. Ehrenfeld
Denise Ferguson
Beba Gaines
Rita Kay Green
Margaret M. Heckler
Dorothy Height
JoAnn Heffernan Heisen
Priscilla Hill-Ardoin
Matina Horner
Robert M. Kaufman
Juanita Kreps
Judith Paulus
Alma Rangel
Barbara Reinike
Lisa Rickard
Diane E. Watson

President

Susan Scanlan

May 16, 2005

Dear Member of Congress:

Last week an amendment to H.R. 1815 was introduced in the HASC Military Personnel Subcommittee, prohibiting the assignment of female soldiers to forward support companies (FSCs). In what seemed a hurried effort, the measure passed by voice vote along party lines. While I am astounded that this amendment passed, I am even more surprised that not one Republican voted no—especially since both the Department of Defense and the Army strongly opposed it. Do not be lulled by soothing comments that it affects only about 30 women. If so, why is this amendment needed? And restricting the work of 30 is still 30 too many, if these women are engaged in critical combat support operations.

This is clearly an issue of national security. At a time when the Army is struggling (and failing) to meet recruiting goals, why would Congress cripple Army efforts even further by limiting the employment of its expensively-trained, combat-zone experienced personnel who happen to be women? These women, who represent 15% of the active-duty Army's overall strength, comprise 25% of soldiers in Combat Support and Combat Support Service occupations. What happens when male technicians assigned to an FSC are killed/wounded in an IED attack or a vehicle accident? This amendment would require that only male soldiers be sent to replace them. If the only replacements immediately available are women, should we place a battlefield commander in the position of obeying the law at the cost of his mission or accomplishing his mission at the cost of breaking the law?

Closing FSCs to women also places a much larger burden of sacrifice on Army men and their families—something women in the Army do not want and something that will build resentment and reduce cohesion in our forces.

Please look at the enclosed story from the May 13th *Washington Post*, which shows how gallantly and competently women are serving our nation. This legislation is a slap in the face to them—dishonoring their service and sacrifices. These women have earned the right to call themselves Soldiers. The American people applaud them—won't you? I hope you will vote "no" to this measure.

Sincerely,


Susan Scanlan